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Influence of Revolution of 1600 on Choral Music

Lied /90

In order to grasp this nature of the great change which the ^artistic revolution of the early part of the 17th century made in Choral music, it is obviously indispensable to have a clear idea of what Choral music was like before that time, and, what the nature of the revolution was. The question is one of great historical importance especially in this country, which is the natural home of Choral music, as Germany is of instrumental Music, and Italy of [illegible] music & France of ballet music. × Our modern Choral music has ~~xxx~~ a very long pedigree - As a direct and distant pedigree a much

Pedigree of choral music

Direct from the earliest experiments in C.P.

what were the first experiments mankind then made
harmony

Doubling

longer pedigree than instrumental music, for the lineal descent comes straight down from the days when the plain song of the early Xtian Church began to change into ~~xxx~~ Music the early form of Contrapuntal Music in the ~~Mxx~~ eleventh and twelfth centuries. Those were the days when the effect of harmony was for the first time beginning to dawn upon the human mind ; for till then all the systems of music in the world had obtained their effect solely by means of unaccompanied melody. Throughout the long period of slow progress from crude experiements of doubling ~~parts~~ melodies at the fifth and octave, & equally crude efforts to make two tunes go together, up to the glorious days of Palestrina the same ~~principle~~ characteristic is found throughout the

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whole of the art. People couldn't think of several voices singing together unless each voice had an independent melody. They could not for a very long time accept as artistic or feasible such an idea as a human voice singing notes which had no significance except a part of harmonies. The modern conception of voice singing in parts is quite a different thing from their idea of singing in Counterpoint, & as an ideal artistic device the ancient ~~idea~~ is as far from modern practice as the Alps are from the homely Malverns. In their practice the individualism of the singer was always maintained, and the false modern idea that the voice can be treated much as a mechanical instrument was inconceivable. But it was rather

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their luck than their wisdom which particular prevented the particular corruption of modern sophisms & carelessness from appearing in their works. They didn't treat voices like ^mechanical instruments because they didn't know how to treat mechanical instruments; & they didn't write empty successions of harmony, because they were only beginning to understand harmony through Counterpoint. It was not till the days of artistic revolution that they began to realise what ^the real effects of harmony ~~mxxx~~ amounted to. It is true their sum of the effect of beautiful chords was being constantly developed for over 500 years, but until they changed their point of view, they did not begin to see what the use of the [illegible] of [illegible] with one another meant as a means of marking the effect of form.

Their manner of working was to take a tune of

Use of Canti fermi

some sort, & put it in ~~the~~ a middle voice and add other parts around it. It was not the least like our modern practice of taking a tune, & writing an accompaniment; for the result of their work was to make something quite new with the rest of the tune, & [illegible] ~~the effect of the ^original tune by the way~~ in which in the midst of the voices who added around it. This was their favourite practice, and very beautiful works they produced by that means, though I am aware they sound strange to people who have not been accustomed to them. Such other devices ~~forms~~ as the early form of Fugue and Canon all had the same general quality, of the perfect independence of the voices; & the highest skill of the writer was to make his various counterpoints flow so as to get the most beautiful

Ingenuity of the composers in getting their communal voice parts so to flow as to produce beautiful chords.

sounding chords out of the voices. In those days there was scarcely any other music to distract them, & consequently ~~from their point of view~~ they worked out this scheme of art to ideal perfection. A thing which militated against their arriving at harmonic effects sooner than they did was the fact that they had to continue their music in old modes or scales, which were ~~continued~~ developed only for melodic music; and it took them some so centuries to discover that they were unsuitable for the purpose of harmony. The Church naturally fought against ~~changing~~ the changes which composers tried to make in the scales in order to make their harmonies sound right; and though the Church

Absence of rhythm & old polyphonic music

is known to have been very strong and very obstinate
is it a wonderful fact that human instinct won the day,
and obtained the forbidden sharps and flats which
were absolutely necessary to make ^satisfactory the
harmony with.

While the singular
struggle between artistic instinct and ecclesiastical
restrictions was going on much minds were
underlying a change in another direction. In the early
days of Contrapuntal music the independence and
~~xxx~~ ^constant movement of the voices had been
very marked. It was not considered good art for one
of the E voices to repeat many syllables to one note -
both because such a [illegible] was alien to the
natural pliancy of the voice, & also because such
repetition implies a rhythmic feeling which was also
alien

influence of rhythm begin to pervade serious music in
the 16th Century

to their feeling. But in the latter part of the 15th and the early years of the 16th century a tendency is noted to allow the voices to respect notes more & more; and the best composers found out how to get very beautiful effects by that means. Moreover as composers got more free in the management of the voice part they began to write lighter music than was customary in the earlier serious contrapuntal style. They began to write dances for sets of voices, and ^set the many tunes like xxx ^& called Villanelles, xxxx, & what not, xx xxx began to xxx which were heard in the street for sets of voices to sing; in a way something like our partsongs, but much better written from the point of view of the separate voices. By such means the

Josquin Des Prez + 1521

influence of rhythm began to creep into choral music; and soon the greatest composers began to fall under its influence. The first great composer of the polyphonic choral epoch was Josquin de Prez, and serious and ethical as most of his music is, the position he occupied in the world in the beginning of the 16th century can be as compared to that of Wagner or Brahms in our own time. Among the things which delighted the world in his work was the remarkable sense he had for simple chord effects. His contrapuntal skill was quite equal to the best of his fellow composers, but he had the spirit to anticipate the moment of affection & to move his hearers hearts when his forerunners had chiefly [illegible] their heads. Soon within his time a many composers appeared who used their skill heights in works which had a new element

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of tunefulness and rhythmic vivacity. That beautiful form of art the Madrigal came into prominence, associated at first with the name of Arcadelt, and the public speedily bought up editions of the works of this kind which were brought out by him as fast as they could be published. By the middle of the 16th century the great development of all these centuries of work culminated in the unsurpassable achievements ^in this [illegible] of Palestrina, Marenzio, Lasso; and x in their wake soon followed the first early composers of our own country Bird, Morley, Wilbye and many others.

~~Now the chief characteristics of their works were first of all the perfection of their [illegible] for the being sung.~~ In all the works of this famous age, the golden age of Choral art, there are certain

Reserved for quiet types of the sentiment of the
music

characteristics which are specially prominent. Foremost among them is their ideal fitness to the means from of performance for which they were intended. In the ^first example. Each voice had an equal share in the effects; and each was so written that his part exposed the words ~~as exactly as the whole length of music~~ of which it formed a part. The individuality of the human creature who sang was kept maintained, and he was never degraded into a simple sound producing machine.

Another notable quality is the peculiarly restricted and powerful quality character of the sentiment. No note of [illegible] distracts the even tune of its way, but effects serene, noble, delicate abound & there is often merriment, gaiety, and wit, and there is often, too, a touch of poetic sadness and melancholy; but of the effects which we call dramatic, of startling suspensions and histrionic effects suggestions we find nothing.

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They are genuine lyric poems, not never dramatic episodes; and they are rather ideal specimens of arts [illegible] powerful specimens of expression.

Reflective rather than artistic, and [illegible] rather of ethereal fancy than of worldly realities.

Another quality is the exquisite purity of the Musical ~~sound~~ harmonies. The ~~chords are so~~ voices are so distributed in the chords that they always produce a peculiarly pure and delicate sound; discords are very sparingly used, and modulations are ^equally scanty, & always within a very simple range of keys.

Within the limits which their circumstances imposed upon them the composers of their era produced the most properly finished and perfectly balanced arts which we can discern to be possible. And as it is difficult to see how they could have gone further in their particular time, it is not surprising that they should have looked about

The new departure theoretic in its origin Subversive in
its results

for some new line of work. But it is curious that the line which they formed, by pure theoretic speculation, should have overturned the whole fabric of the ancient arts, and made its renewal impossible. The project formed by the aspiring performers was merely to devise some principle upon which the music could a solo singer could recite a poem [or] a speech in musical intervals imitated from the ordinary declamation be came on with the support of simple chords in accompaniment. ~~They had been habituated to the effect of the most familiar and supposed that the imitation of poetry in a style imitated closely from the forms of ordinary speech, and without time or musical figure, would be supporti~~ sufficient to They supposed that tunefulness and the intent of musical figure would be superfluous; th as they felt that

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the interest ought to be centred on the words of the poem, to which the music should serve ~~xxxx~~ as a vague enhancement. And in the earliest works of their new school, such as those of Peri, Caccini, Cairline, Gagliano & so further themes result, generally a form of art which is musically speaking extremely chaste and pointless. But there were two things which soon came out of it in spite of ~~thxxx~~ their misconceptions. Their musical intents soon impelled them to put musical expression in their recitation, and the new way in which they looked at chords as lumps of sound impelled them unconsciously to ~~face~~ find out certain principles of chords relationships. And these two simple developments soon served to bring to an end the whole fabric of the old

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contrapuntal system. For the breath of ? which began to ? in the new music make the ~~quite~~ quiet serene of the older school seems tame & slow to the furies of the new. And the treatment of chords in lumps was so vastly more easy than the producing of them through counterpoint, ~~& even certain elements of counterpoint became so much easier when the chords were thought of first,~~ that before the century was many years old men had almost given up the old principles as if they were not worth the trouble of thinking about.

The radical change in the point of view is shown by the way in which they wrote their accompaniment. They did not even take the trouble to write all the notes which the Lutes & the Theorboes & the Clavicembalos

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xxx were to play, but they wrote a bass line and put figures over it to represent the chords that were wanted, & so long as ~~they~~ the performers followed the notes which the figures represented they ~~played~~ ~~performers~~ might play what they liked. ^Frequent practise of such a devise as This was just the sort of process to make men feel very quickly the content & relationships of chords. The old church modes had hampered them in not realising the chord system, because they were only allowed to use some of the notes which was necessary as a concession to human weakness. But now they threw the rules of the modes overboard, & woke directly to new facilities of expression. In fact they formed a ^wholly new field ^for their energies and ~~th~~ like explorers in new lands were satisfied with the novelties of rather moderate crops.

Lapse not barbarism

The new Music, as it was called, was enormously below the old in artistic value. The old had been its wary & mature kind of art; the new xx was for some time a lapse into the crudity of barbarism. The Music of Palestrina & Marenzio sounds to some people as if it came from another order of beings than masters, but we feel them to be masters of this craft. Peri, Caccini, and even Monteverdi, Certon, ^ (2) & Cavalli (1) are mere ^adventurous juveniles with no mastery of technique, no sense of artistic finish, & next to no judgement. But the door into the new world of art had been opened and ~~the old~~ was shut behind them and they will not go back; & there was a very long & modern hill to climb before the music of the new could approach in any way the

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finish & completeness of the music of the old school;
& it was only by reviving some of its principles in a
modified form that the x maturity ^of the new
became possible. ~~Of the new men some had~~
~~been to ---- up in the learning of the old school, such~~
~~as Monteverdi: and x in some ecclesiastical circles~~
~~the tradition was kept up though the opinion of men~~
~~had to change ; & it was through such circumstances~~
~~that a cert certain amount of improvement became~~
~~possible.~~ The first effect of the revolution was to kill
Choral music almost entirely. A leap was made to
from a state of art in which everything was Choral, at
least in principle – to a state of art in which the Choral
music would have been

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the better for disappearing, since what little remained in the sung Operas & Oratorios was so miserably inartistic and ineffective. Voices did not admit of being written for 3 a bass line and figures, and as the new composers ~~with~~ were ignorant or contemptuous of the old rules of partwriting ~~they~~ their know reckless efforts at novelty & independence merely landed them in dry crudities. This incapacity for writing anything even partially effective for choral combinations is characteristic of all the ~~inde~~ writers who belonged emphatically to the new school like near the end of the century. Peri, Caccini, Cavalieri^Faglia, Mazzocchi Cavalli, Cert are all incapable of writing anything effective for voices, be because they had not

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learnt. Monteverdi was almost equally stuck art because he too readily condemned the old rules. But he was a man of larger powers than the rest and applied his views in a way which my [illegible] illustrated the effect of the new theories upon the old. But it was to another school than this that the honour of rehabilitating the conditions of art belonged. The tradition of educating naturally continued much as before in musical schools, & though they were swamped by the interest in the new ^movement, the mission of Carissimi and the first pupils to whom he transmitted his stylistic views ultimately brought back at least some of the artistic triumphs of the old school, and gave music a fresh start finely.

But the feature that strikes the intelligent student

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of these days immediately is that the Counterpoint of these days is quite another thing from that of the old school. Though the voices move about very freely in the best kinds still the freedom & expression of the individual in x has now been subordinated to another principle of effect. Under all the ~~vag~~~~xx~~ intricacies of their nature the system of harmonies becomes more & more apparent. ~~They ar~~The voices held together by a new bond. The details in m [illegible] in a much more grand principle of effect. The selection of the blocks of harmonies ~~xx~~ simplify the efforts of a composer after theatrical and dramatic ~~stxx~~ expression ; they also lend themselves to the accompaniment of tune, and also to a new kind of rhythmic treatment. Now in the variety of

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the opportunities composers were tempted to relax their hold upon the fitness of things. The new facilities which were around in music tempted them to try and to ~~xx~~make ~~th~~xx voices do things which they were not fit for. They tried to make theatrical and dramatic effects without considering that art is such a subtle thing that the not [illegible] of human beings to art as ~~mechanical~~ mere mechanics betrayed itself in the sense of empty antique when such things are done – and this temptation had ^every now and then musical composers xx throughout the whole history of music ever since the year 1600. But on the other hand it must be conferred that the new departure had found out a ~~new~~ great field for choral effects in ~~its~~ initiating the possibility of [illegible] the choral the distinct dramatic use of a chorus; representing the supression of the feelings of a man of people in any remarkable situation. Even Carissimi saw the possibilities of this mode of

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using the chorus ; and made some very successful [illegible] in his Jephtha, and Belshazzar & the oratorios. But the favourite style of choral writing was first pushed into the background in Italy for ever by the development of solo singing. With this Chorus singing developed into a kind of easy going formality, consisting of various successions of chords interspersed with [illegible] figures. It was not till such men as Handel and Bach formed the more serious purpose of their minds to such work that chorus writing really revived. But even then it was on a different footing from the old; for these great choral works do not produce their adequate effect till they are rendered by a large number of singers: & those singers of a less than the grandeur of the refined & finished effect of enormous masses of voices is truly felt. But the principle of treatment is greatly different from the order. For much the

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old state of things the singers were not only fewer but much more [illegible] for their parts. To do justice to the old style of arts the singers needed to be cultivated artists in their way; but in the modern state of things not much more is needed in a chorus singer than that he shall have good lungs & voice & a good ear. Each kinds of art [illegible] has ~~the~~ its particular excellencies. The old Choral art was more subtly delicate in its artistic qualities, & its perfection was more refined & its texture more finished than the modern choral works. But in the modern Choral works the great element of dramatic ^& descriptive effect more than counterbalances these advantages:, & of their these are many types within Opera and Oratorios. Reaching from Carissimi's tentative efforts, & P[word obscured by glare] stalwart utterances, to Handels powerful [illegible] of genius : taking more personally dramatic characters in Bach's Matthew Passion, and a more vividly picturesque characters in Berlioz's Faust and Mendelssohns Baal Choruses, and the most artistic vividness of realism in some of the crowd scenes in Wagners "Meistersingers".

Brahms Requiem
Song of De[illegible]
Royal
Style[?] [illegible]

And Choral art has still great possibilities before it still. The great instrumental art forms seem to be almost enchanted[?]. They have been brought to such perfection by Beethoven & Brahms, but that it is not easy to see what more of the highest kind can be done. But the great masters of instrumental art, such previous to the present day, have not given the best of their powers to choral music. And the combination [illegible] revival of the principles of the [illegible] form of art ^& their combination with & the extended experience of general effect the infinite resonance of modern orchestration under the influence of our enormously extended experience of general effects [illegible] to offer a large field the most hopeful opportunities of honourable achievement in all the range of Music. The mistrust for Choral music has always been healthy & strong in England, and it may be that in this field she will at last find a musical position that is worthy of her. And in that advancement I know with that there is no town which

will more worthy be represented that or give more
substantial help that than

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